

It is just as you say; prominence in public life inevitably means that creatures of morbid and semi-criminal type are incited thereby to murderous assault. But, my dear Sir George, I must say I have never understood public men who get nervous about assassination. For the last eleven years I have of course thoroughly understood that I might at any time be shot, and probably would be shot some time. I think I have come off uncommonly well. But what I cannot understand is any serious-minded public man not being so absorbed in the great and vital questions with which he has to deal as to exclude thoughts of assassination. I do not think this is a question of courage at all. I think it is a question of the major interest driving out the minor interest. It is exactly as it is in the army. I can readily understand any enlisted man having qualms about his own safety, but the minute that a man gets command of others and has responsibilities for more than his own personal safety, especially when he becomes a Colonel or a General, I don't see how, in the middle of his wearing anxieties, he has a chance to wonder whether he personally will be shot. As I say, it is not a question of courage: it is a question of perspective, of proper proportion. If tomorrow I were to go fox-hunting I would probably feel a little more need of hardening my heart when I approached an uncommonly stiff jump than I would have felt thirty years ago; just because there would be no

responsibility  
in the matter, no duties to be first considered,  
nothing what-  
ever to appeal to me except the chance of a  
smash-up as  
balanced against the fun of the hunting and  
the galloping.  
But if I had a division of cavalry and were in  
battle with  
it, so far as I thought selfishly at all, it would  
be as to  
whether I were handling the cavalry  
creditably. It would  
not be as to whether I was in danger of  
being shot. So  
that I never have felt that public men who  
were shot  
whether they were killed or not, were entitled  
to any espe-  
cial sympathy; and I do most emphatically feel  
that when  
in danger it is their business to act in the  
manner which